It's Time to Acknowledge Anti-White Racism

By Lynn Uzzell

Recently, Michael Tesler commented on "The Rise of White Identity Politics." Tesler's analysis draws on years of research into racialized politics, and he shows convincingly that there is a rise in white identity politics and that this rise is tied to "perceptions of anti-white discrimination." However, when trying to explain *why* perceptions of anti-white bias might also be on the rise, his analysis falls flat. Supposedly, it has something to do with Republicans and Donald Trump.

Never once does the author speculate whether "perceptions" of such discrimination might be on the rise because anti-white racism is becoming increasingly common. In other words, perhaps white Americans are accurately perceiving a real phenomenon that is now pervasive in schools and the workplace.

Anti-White Racism, by Definition

As any student of George Orwell knows, no authoritarian government can ever gain complete control unless it commandeers people's thinking through the manipulation of language. Thus, the dystopian powers in "1984" deliberately turned the meaning of words upside-down in a process known as double-think.

The same process is happening today with the words used to discuss racism. In true Orwellian fashion, Ibram X. Kendi (pictured) insists that the only way to fight racism is to embrace racial discrimination in perpetuity. This "anti-racism," as he calls it, is as likely to stamp out genuine racism as Orwell's Ministry of Truth was apt to stamp out falsehoods.

In order to understand what is going on, we must call to mind the traditional definition of racism: the stereotyping, denigrating, marginalizing, or excluding of persons on the basis of race. Look up any definition of racism prior to the racial awokening taking place in the last decade, and it will be: 1) race neutral; and 2) involve some act of free will—relating to word, deed, or belief.

The definition of racism has undergone a radical change in a short time. According to the new eighth-grade curriculum for the Albemarle County (Va.) School District, racism now means: "The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people."

Perhaps the most jarring aspect of this new definition is that it is no longer race-neutral. It is now impossible, by definition, for white people to be the victims of racism. The definition itself constructs a "racial hierarchy" whereby only people of color may be victimized, and only "white people" may marginalize or oppress.

But there is something even more insidious about the new definition. Since the "marginalization and/or oppression of people of color" is no longer committed by word, thought, or deed — but is based instead on an inescapable "socially constructed racial hierarchy" that *always* "privileges white people" — it means that white people are engaging in racism simply by being white (and hence privileged) within this impersonal system of marginalization and oppression.

A person of color is a victim of racism, by definition. A person identified as white is a racist, by definition. Therefore, not only does the new definition fail to capture the full meaning of racism; the definition is itself an example of the anti-white racism being taught to our children.

Teaching Anti-White Racism as American History

Anti-white racism is also seeping into history lessons, most notably through the curriculum adapted from the New York Times' 1619 Project.When the 1619 Project was first published, it

attracted immediate criticism. Five eminent historians criticized it for its bias and factual errors. Others criticized it for emphasizing only what was blameworthy about America's history and omitting what was praiseworthy.

While these concerns are certainly valid, there is another serious problem that has received scant attention: The account is a surprisingly racist version of U.S. history.

The lead article for the 1619 Project is by Nikole Hannah-Jones, who has been writing anti-white screeds at least since she was a college sophomore. In a letter to her college paper, she alleged: "The white race is the biggest murderer, rapist, pillager, and thief of the modern world." Not only were the white people in America's past "barbaric devils," but the "descendants of these savage people" continue to harm "the Black community" to this day. Non-white peoples, by contrast, were uniformly portrayed as both virtuous and victimized.

Of course, nobody should be held accountable for the hyperboles or inanities one might espouse as an undergraduate; few of us could bear the brunt of such an examination. The sophomoric scribblings of young Nicole Hannah would be irrelevant except that the pattern in her writing has not changed. What we find in her Pulitzer Prize-winning contribution to the 1619 Project is more moderate in tone and more sophisticated in composition, but otherwise it is the same racialized dualism she espoused in college.

In Hannah-Jones' article, an important part of the lesson plan adapted for schools, the word "white" is used to describe people or communities 77 times. In 35 cases, "white" people are described as holding some kind of power or privilege (almost always unearned or illegitimate). In 32 cases, the word is associated with oppression, injustice, and cruelty ("white enslavers," "widespread white violence," "systemic white suppression of black life," etc.).

In this telling of history, "white Americans" during the darkest days of Jim Crow held the same racist ideology as Jefferson and his "fellow white colonists." With 32 instances of specifically "white" barbarity, it is impossible to ignore the gratuitous overuse of this racial category when describing everything that is diabolical in this country's history. Nowhere do we read about a "white" American acting for the good, except a single instance in which certain "white Republicans" joined forces with the black community after the Civil War.

We find the polar opposite when examining the 136 references to "black" people in this article. The word is used 72 times to describe victimization by violence or injustice (always at the hands of "whites") and 49 times in laudable terms. There is not a single instance in which "black" is used to describe a person or deed deserving of criticism.

While only a textual analysis can provide the big picture, individual passages drive home the racist message more explicitly. "For the most part," according to this history, "black Americans fought [to secure rights] alone. Yet we never fought only for ourselves." The article teaches schoolchildren that "black Americans, more than any other group, embrace the democratic ideals of a common good." Children also learn: "Our founding fathers may not have actually believed in the ideals they espoused, but black people did."

Hannah-Jones' composition is American history in black and white. It teaches that "blackness" is everything that ennobles this country and "whiteness" is everything that debases it. There was a time in the Jim Crow South, to their everlasting shame, when schools taught children lessons in white supremacy masked as American history. The 1619 Project has introduced a new form of black supremacy to American history, and it has been adopted by over 4,500 schools.

Anti-White Racism in the Workplace

Anyone who has been paying attention to corporate culture in America cannot but have noticed the increasing pressures to "diversify" the hiring and promotion process, often by explicitly demanding that white (especially white male) employees be held back.

The Economist has reported on the "dizzying number of equity-related" hiring commitments promised by American businesses. Facebook alone "has promised to hire 30% more black people in leadership positions." Since other businesses across America have made similar commitments, we can expect the competition to hire and promote black professionals will drive their value to stratospheric heights, while the perceived value of white professionals will plummet.

A recent training program at Bank of America made the consequences of such commitments unmistakably clear. It instructed "white employees in particular" to "cede power to people of color." There was no word that any member of Bank of America's board of directors had offered to step down to make room for a replacement of color. Demands for self-denial are always made by persons who already hold seats of power and privilege (and who have no intention of giving them up). It is ever the less privileged employees who are expected to submit to degradation based on their race or sex.

Thus far, the discontent arising among marginalized employees is only being discussed in whispers. Anne Applebaum recently interviewed a couple of men who believe they were punished at work "because a white, male boss felt he had to publicly sacrifice another white man in order to protect his own position." Yet Americans are reluctant to speak out about anti-white racism, lest they be accused of being anti-black.

Racism of any kind is never a single, defining act. It is death by a thousand cuts, and these cuts to white employees have become ubiquitous.

I know of a book project that had been under contract for two years before being scuttled. The press rejected the volume of collected essays, in part, because the 14 contributing authors were not sufficiently "diverse." The acquisition editor at the press defended the judgment of one of its anonymous reviewers: "Books coming out right now simply have to address the systemic whiteness and maleness that pervades the academy, and particularly political science."

This demand came despite a shortage of "scholars of color" who write on the particular subject the book addresses. Nevertheless, it was deemed essential that the volume's contributors find some way to dilute their "whiteness" (in the subjective gaze of one anonymous reviewer) before the press would consent to publish on this topic.

The Dangers of Anti-White Racism, and the Solution

Skeptics inclined to dismiss the seriousness of anti-white racism will likely counter that the examples I've described are milquetoast; they're not nearly as horrific as the anti-black racism of the Jim Crow South. Of course they're not. Anti-white racism is not that bad now, nor is it reasonable to expect it will get that bad in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, racism of any kind is an evil in itself; anti-white racism is today a greater problem, at least in the white-collar world, than anti-black racism; and its continued prevalence and severity is likely to spawn a backlash that will further enflame racial enmity.

For anyone who may be skeptical that anti-white racism is now worse than anti-black racism, consider this: Overt acts of anti-black discrimination today are socially, politically, and professionally unimaginable. Anti-white discrimination, on the other hand, has become almost an institutional requirement. Schools and businesses seem fearful lest they are accused of not doing enough to stereotype, denigrate, marginalize, and suppress "whiteness."

In addition to the ubiquity of the evil itself, this racism is bound to provoke a backlash. The more that citizens identifying as "white" perceive themselves as under attack, the more likely they will be to coalesce politically as a form of defense. Hence, it is predictable that we would find, as Tesler has reported, undercurrents of white identity politics at the polls and, at the fringes, a rise in white supremacy and white nationalism.

Yet, if Tesler and others are serious about combating this scourge of white identity politics, it will require a better understanding of its causes than they seem willing to explore. As long as anti-white racism is so flagrant, it is useless to hope that Americans won't notice or won't respond to it.

Only by first acknowledging the rise in anti-white racism can we start thinking creatively about combating both the evil itself and the evils it spawns.

Any permanent solution to America's enduring problems with racism will ultimately have to come from the victims rather than the perpetrators. We have minimal influence over the minds and hearts of the bigots. However, as I've written before, if the targets of racism would identify as non-racial, they cease cooperating with the bigotry of racial sorting.

It is not only anti-white racism that can be defeated by this strategy. Racial renunciation is emerging as a rallying cry from public intellectuals with diverse skin tones. Whether it's known as "race abolitionism" or "unlearning race," Kmele Foster, Thomas Chatterton Williams, Kenny Xu and Christian Watson, Erec Smith, Paul Rossi, and Angel Eduardo have all been powerful spokesmen for real change. In what is perhaps the best descriptor of this goal, Jason D. Hill has argued that black Americans, in particular, "are ideal candidates for racial self-emancipation." There is a budding recognition that people of all complexions would benefit from renouncing the divisive racial categories imposed on us by others.

If Americans can ever learn to internalize these three words, "I am non-racial," it would free them from feelings of personal outrage when confronted by the racism of others. If they begin insisting that their bosses and teachers recognize their non-racial designation, they free themselves from the most overt forms of their discrimination. Eventually, there will come a day when racism will lose its grip on the minds and hearts of Americans.

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